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Bill 1163

Good morning members of the appropriations committee. My name is Rachel Gibson, I am a student at the University of Connecticut school of social work. I am here today to advocate for bill 1163, an act concerning expenditures of state agencies providing public health, mental health, and developmental services. I have reviewed the Governor's budget plan in relation to the budget proposed by the appropriations committee for the department of public health, the department of developmental services, and the department of mental health. I know with the current economic crisis, we have to be very wise with how money will be allocated in these areas. However, I took notice that the committee recommended that there be a decrease in funding from the Governor's proposed budget to the department of mental health in both fiscal year 2010 and 2011. I ask that the appropriations committee reconsider the amount of monies proposed to these services. I currently work in a homeless shelter, many of the people who come there suffer from mental health issues. It is very difficult to see people suffer in this way. Staff members work very hard to meet the needs of those who are mentally ill, but many of the staff members are hard working people who do not have the appropriate skills needed to help those who are mentally ill, and staff are often put in a position that could potentially turn ugly because when you are dealing with a population that comes right off of the street and you do not know or have access to some of their backgrounds, this is a very unpredictable situation to be in. People like myself who serve those with mental health issues in places like shelters rely on the department of mental health to make sure that people are receiving the full range of services that can be provided, especially during these difficult economic times, when the stress level for those with mental health can be higher than usual. Mental health is just as important as Physical Health; if not more because if one is not able to maintain their mental health, it is likely that they will not take care of their physical health. The homeless are not the only population who suffers from mental health; there are many people in our communities who suffer from mental health issues. I urge you in these difficult times to allocate the full amount of the money proposed by the governor to these services. People are suffering, let us do all that we can to try to alleviate the suffering of others by advocating that those who suffer from mental health and need these services will receive the full amount of what we are able to give.